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Before the scouting trip, I have already developed a great interest in public health and humanitarian areas since I believe that it's a greater calling than being a surgeon itself. Being a doctor might enable us to help patients on a one-to-one basis, but by devoting effort in improving the local public health system, more people can be benefited. After the trip, it reinforces my determination to enter the stream, after witnessing the backward facilities and inaccessible medical care services in these rural areas, which urgently needs our attention.

Difficulties in establishing communication with the outer world is my first impression of these rural areas. Prior to our trip, our pre-trip assessment was met with difficulties as we were unable to gather information on Tengcun villagers' health behaviour, waste treatment, disaster awareness. Thanks to Mr. Mong Ke Lu, founder of a local charity 愛苗之家, we were able to gain a superficial understanding of the village and identify a few areas worth addressing. Yet, it's only through our scouting trip and interviewing villagers can we truly get a whole picture of the health needs of Tengcun. Though villagers are friendly and it's incredible fun connecting with them, time-effectiveness was relatively low as we have to travel for a long journey without bring substantial help to the villagers. If we are able to promote the use of technology in these rural areas, such as wechat conference, whatsapp call, we might be able to save time in our health assessment process by conducting phone interviews and devote more time in actual health intervention work.

That being said, our scouting trip was meaningful in the way that it paves the way for the long-term development of the healthcare team. We reflected the needs of locals to Mr Liu, a government official and by putting our heads together, we are confident we can reach a sustainable model of Project Mingde in the future.

Inaccessible medical care services is another major issue identified. Access to hospitals in Wangdong is arduous and time-consuming, and patients may have to travel a long bumpy way to reach a hospital. The absence of efficient A&E services also explains the low survival rate in traffic accidents and stroke, which is common among Tengcun villagers.

On the happy side, our team was greeted with firecrackers and their local traditional reed music as we arrived in Daiping for the handover ceremony of Mingde Jundi Teacher Dormitory. The smile and laughter of villagers is the best motivation for us, invigorating us after the tiring journey and reminding us that "virtue is its own reward". Small steps make a great difference, however trivial our work may seem, I believe we are one step closer to building a love and caring society.

In the end, I would like to devote my heartfelt thank you to the organizers of the trip and Grace for bringing me on this amazing journey of medical voluntary work. I am also lucky to have Daniel, Chris, Kristy and Kathy to be my companions who adds spice to the trip. You guys' passion and enthusiasm light everyone up throughout the exhausting drive (esp Grace's sleeping pose!).

"We make a life by what we give" (Winston Churchill). This scouting trip acts as my stepping stone to future public health projects which I would like to engage myself in. I look forward to working with everyone in the near future!